

More Puzzling Than the Biblical Judgment of Solomon

Mystery of the "Dream Baby" Grandson of England's Recent Viceroy of India and the Curious Revelations of After-the-War Customs the Quarrel Over It Brought Before the Surprised English Courts

LONDON, Aug. 10.

THE divorce suit of the Hon. John Hugo Russell, son and heir of the rich and powerful Lord Amphil, recently England's Viceroy of India, has raised a question more puzzling than the Biblical "judgment of Solomon."

When two women claimed to be the mother of one baby, the great Israelite settled the question by ordering the child cut in two and divided between the claimants. The real mother then revealed herself by offering to give up her child rather than see it killed.

But an English jury, assisted by the greatest array of legal talent in England, was unable to decide the fatherhood of Mrs. Russell's baby. The verdict showed the utmost confusion of mind. The jurors agreed that the father of the child was not one of two men named by Mr. Russell as co-respondents, but they failed to agree as to whether or not it was Mr. Russell.

Perhaps the most amazing fact of the case is that both husband and wife asserted that they were both unconscious of how the baby originated. They had begun married life with the understanding that their companionship was to be Platonic, and both kept to the understanding.

"It seems to have been a dream baby—not a child of man," said one of the women witnesses.

A vast mass of medical evidence was introduced. Counsel regretted that a blood test of father and child would not help to establish the paternity until he was over a year old. Lady Amphil, the grandmother, declared emphatically that the baby did not resemble her son or any of her family in the least. The jurors had an opportunity to examine the baby privately.

The case has caused a profound impression, not only on account of the medical and legal points raised, but because of the great social prominence of the persons and the revelation of remarkable customs in after-the-war fashionable society—young men and women going to Paris and staying at hotels unchaperoned, men and women dressing up in one another's clothes, men dressing in women's clothes, and so forth.

The young husband's father, Lord Amphil, recently, as said, Viceroy of India, holds the highest position in the aristocracy and belongs to a branch of the Duke of Bedford's family. The young man's mother, Lady Amphil, is a "Lady of the Bedchamber" to the Queen, a post of great honor at court. The Queen is undoubtedly much distressed at the exposure of current tendencies in the younger element of society.

The petitioner married his wife, Miss Christabel Hulme Hart, daughter of Colonel John Hart, of the Leinster Regiment, British army, in 1918 against the wishes of his parents, Lord and Lady Amphil. The day before the marriage Miss Hart insisted that their union should be Platonic, and this agreement, the husband said, had been observed.

The baby was born on October 15, 1921. This year Mr. Russell brought suit for divorce, naming as co-respondents two young army officers, Gilbert M. Bradley and Lionel Leslie Cross.

Mrs. Russell had lived much among artists and war workers and was extremely unconventional. That was shown by the testimony of her husband, which, however, revealed many peculiarities of his own.

Owing to the importance of the principals, all the London newspapers devoted pages to the printing of the entire testimony in the case, and from these the following excerpts are taken:

On the stand Lord Amphil's heir was asked:

Q.—Would you describe your wife as absolutely fearless?

MR. RUSSELL—Yes, and absolutely independent in her dealings with everybody. She said she did not care what people said or thought about her. She worked in Woolwich Arsenal and was managing secretary to the Whitworth Engineering Company. She flew to Belgium with a pilot on business.

Q.—She used to do odd things, did she not? On one occasion, having lost or left behind the key of the flat, did she not climb through the basement of the flat and up the fire escape?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Did you go sliding about on the roof of the house in Curzon street?

A.—Yes, I went on the roof for a breath of fresh air, and she came out. But she could not have slid more than two or three feet before going into the street. There was no danger, because there is a large parapet.

Q.—Were you from the outset jealous of her going out with other men?

A.—Yes, at first she told me who she was going out with and where she was going.

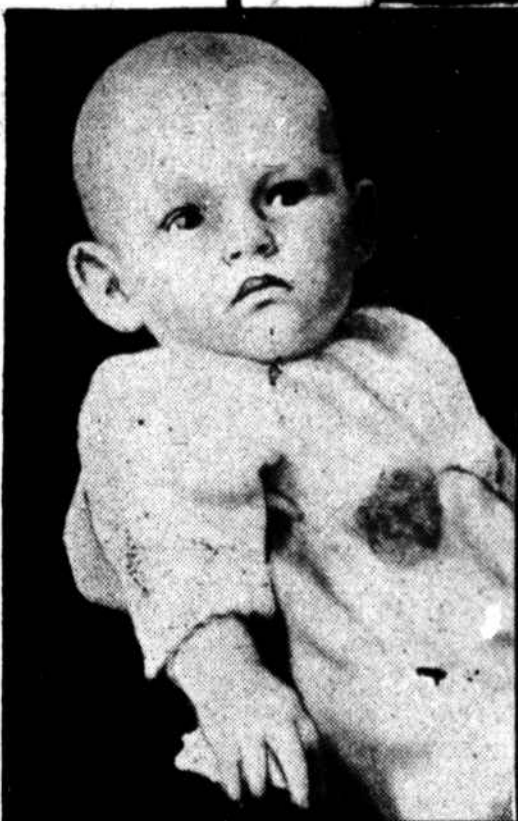
Counsel read a letter from the wife to her husband from Switzerland in 1920 stating:

"Darlingest Old Thing—Your wife is so happy that she is almost bursting with it. You will be furiously jealous, but I can't help it. We have done no sports yet owing to the rain. Your wife has a vast following of adoring young men, who fight each other for the pleasure of dancing with her.

"There are Greeks and slim, silky Argentinians who are dreams of perfection in dancing. Also the professional dancer with whom I do tangoes every night. I have four young men in the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry. They are pre-



The Hon. John Hugo Russell, Son and Heir of Lord Amphil, on His Way to the Divorce Court.



The "Dream Baby" Whose Parentage an English Jury Was Unable to Decide.

less and so naughty, and so is your wife. It is quite impossible to be quite quiet.

"I am so much in love with my Dago young man. His hair is beautifully Marcel waved, his clothes fit like a glove, and he has a lovely hand."

Considerable emphasis was placed by Mrs. Russell's counsel on a photograph of the Hon. John Russell dressed as a fashionable young woman:

Q.—You were a little unconventional yourself when you lived at Curzon street?

MR. RUSSELL—I don't think so.

Q.—Do you recognize this photograph?

A.—The photograph is one of myself dressed as a woman at a fancy dress ball. My commanding officer and his wife went with me, his wife dressed as a man.

Q.—I make no imputation against the lady, but you went out with a Mrs. S. a good deal?

A.—I dined with her and her husband.

Q.—You were fond, when at Curzon street, of dressing up as a woman?

A.—I did so sometimes.

Q.—Did you dress up as a woman in this lady's flat?

A.—Yes, before a fancy dress ball.

Miss Acton testified that her friend, Mrs. Russell, had told her of the curious pre-nuptial arrangement.

The Hon. Mrs. John Hugo Russell, the Mother of the "Dream Baby."

"A month later," said the witness, "Mrs. Russell told me that a fortune-teller had talked to her and her cousin and had said that a baby was on its way. Mrs. Russell said: 'I suppose it's going to be me.' Mrs. Russell added that there were such things as Hunnish scenes, and they had a fortnight of them, and that she could not make a scene about it. I received a letter from Mrs. Russell dated July 4, in which she stated:

"I am having a priceless time, John (Mr. Russell), after evincing the greatest delight over the child and writing pages of joy, and deciding even that the Duke of Bedford should be godfather . . . is now trying to divorce me. As I have never done anything he was not aware of, and since I have always told him of all my flirtations and frivolities—he knows of all my week-ends—I don't see that he has a leg to stand on.

"I would rather old Satan himself were the father. But it can't be helped, and if I am mother of a horror with sticking-out teeth and adenoids we would all feel pretty sure about its parentage. I long for the fray. Come, darling, 'on't you, and take a box or whatever it is at the Russell vs. Russell case. If only I could take it seriously it would be more seemly, but the last few days I have been wildly hysterical over it. Every one knows of it now. Do think of the rows of cos (co-respondents) lined up for the trial."

In another letter Mrs. Russell wrote: "Of course, 'Stilts' (her husband) can make up a thousand things against me without going an inch out of his way. Every week-end I have been with George Cross" (two other names are also mentioned, said counsel) "and Gilbert (Bradley), at whose flat I stayed one night because I had lost my key. G. had to go out and phone for 'Stilts' to bring me some clothes in the morning, so that I

could get home again. . . . I have the evidence of Johnson, my maid at Curzon street, that he used to burst into my room at all hours of the night. He had been found out already in two flagrant lies to my solicitors, so I saw my case is frightfully strong. I have been so indiscreet that he has enough evidence to divorce me once a week."

Q.—Did Mrs. Russell say what she meant when she referred to the Hunnish scenes between her and her husband?

A.—I said to her, "Do you mean to say he was brutal?" and she nodded her head, and I said, "I don't believe it."

Another witness, Mrs. Moresby White, said Mrs. Russell told her the story about the fortune teller and the "Dream Baby."

"Mrs. Russell," said this witness, "remarked that she had never done anything wrong in her life, and although she would rather her child was anybody's but her husband's, it was in fact his. Mrs. Russell referred to his sleepwalking and said:

"Is it not curious? It must have occurred then."

Mrs. Russell said she was absolutely convinced at the time that the relations between her and her husband had nothing to do with paternity. Her husband would come into her room in the early part of 1921 and say he had been lying awake for hours with a gun, and threatened that he would shoot himself unless she treated him differently.

Q.—When did it first occur to you that you were going to be a mother?

A.—When I went to see a clairvoyant. . . . just went for fun. I have often consulted clairvoyants.

Q.—What did she say?

A.—She said I had an amazing marriage and other things, and it was then that I realized that I was going to become a mother. It was an extraordinary thing. It very much surprised me, and I could not account for it.

Counsel asked Mrs. Russell if she

How King Solomon Settled the Parentage of the Baby That Was Claimed by Two Women. From the Painting by J. J. Tissot.

had found her husband sleep walking. MRS. RUSSELL—I presume he was sleep walking. I passed him outside the door of Curzon street in his pajamas in mid-Winter. He said he had no recollection of it, so it confirmed my conviction that he was sleep walking. He was not completely unconscious, and I saw him back to his bed. He was always very vague.

Q.—Did you speak to him? A.—I said, "Hullo!" or something of that sort. He did not answer.

Q.—Did he follow you upstairs obediently?

A.—Perfectly. His eyes were open and he appeared to see things. He did not stumble in any way. I led him to his room and he went to sleep straightaway.

Q.—Has this story of the sleep walking anything in the world to do with the child?

A.—When I was talking to my husband on that subject we both agreed that we could not account for the baby in any other way. From what I know it is highly improbable, but at the time it was the only explanation.

Q.—Your husband, in a letter on the subject, said: "Life at No. 1 (Curzon street) with a mad husband must have been simply awful. I can only say I don't know anything about it at all. If only you had told me I would have padlocked myself in my room rather than such things should have happened."

A.—Yes. The co-respondent, Lieutenant Bradley, told the court that before Mrs. Russell was married, he was in love with her, and they travelled by night train to Edinburgh with the object of becoming man and wife, but on arrival they found they could not be married.

Their engagement was broken off about a fortnight afterward. When he knew the lady was married to a brother-officer he put all thoughts of love on one side. He had never kissed her since she was married.

He mentioned the occasion when Mrs. Russell lost the latchkey of the flat where she and her husband lived.

As she came to witness's flat in the middle of the night, he made a bed up on two chairs and Mrs. Russell occupied his bed.

Next morning they explained the situation quite frankly to her husband.

Reverting to their friendship prior to the lady's marriage, he said he was never quite sure, until they went to Edinburgh, whether he was engaged to her or not.

Lieutenant Cross, now twenty-three and married, described a journey to Calais on the occasion of his second visit to Paris with Mrs. Russell, the trip having been discussed with her husband at a dance.

Owing to some mistake by the hotel porter in London they occupied the same sleeping compartment in the train.

When they found what the conditions were they made it an ordinary railway compartment and lay down fully clothed.

He said he saw other people behaving in the same way with her "just like a happy family."

Mrs. Blanche Anstruther Hart, widow of Colonel Hart, and mother of Mrs. Russell, said her daughter had led a very independent life.

Witness used to have large parties at Broadhurst, in Sussex, the house frequently being full of men and women. Some of them had to sleep in a shake-down and some over the stables.

After a trial lasting three weeks the jury found that there had been no misconduct with either of the men named as co-respondents, but they disagreed on the question whether there had been misconduct with a man unknown.

It therefore remains uncertain whether the poor baby, who, in the ordinary course of events will inherit the peerage of Lord Amphil, is the son of his father or not.